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**GOVERNOR MARTZ JOINS PRIVATE/PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERSHIP IN
PROMOTING MONTANA WINTER FUN & “SKI PASS FOR LIFE”
AT MACKENZIE RIVER PIZZA LUNCHEON**

Helena – January 29, 2004 – Governor Judy Martz is putting her support behind an in-state “Winter In Your Own Backyard” campaign that offers a Montanan a chance to win a Montana Ski Pass for Life.

Governor Martz will join the campaign’s private and public sector partners at an 11:30 a.m. luncheon at Helena’s MacKenzie River Pizza Company restaurant on Friday, Jan. 30. The campaign’s partners include MacKenzie River Pizza Company, Montana Ski Areas Association, Big Sky Airlines and the Montana Commerce Department’s statewide tourism promotion program, Travel Montana.

“I am delighted to join in promoting our beautiful state’s outdoor recreational opportunities, and to support the private/public partnership “Winter in Your Own Backyard” campaign,” Governor Martz said. “I would like to encourage more of these types of efforts,” she added.

The in-state winter campaign encourages Montanans to enjoy the wealth of winter recreation available in their own backyard. Through radio, TV, newspaper and billboards, it highlights the variety of winter sports available in Montana including skiing and snowboarding, snowmobiling, dog sledding, ice fishing, soaking in hot springs, watchable wildlife and more.

Montana’s winter activities and the in-state promotion are highlighted on the Montana Commerce Department’s winter website – www.skimt.com. As an incentive to visit the website or utilize the services of the campaign’s partners, Montanans are invited to enter a contest where the grand prize is a “Ski Pass for Life” good at 14 Montana ski areas. There are also weekly prizes consisting of Big Sky Airline roundtrip tickets and Montana ski area lift tickets. Details of the contest and participating ski areas are on the Commerce website (www.skimt.com).

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The Montana winter promotion is one of the largest public/private partnership efforts the Commerce Department's tourism program has sponsored. The Bozeman-based Mackenzie River Pizza restaurant chain has 11 outlets across Montana. Big Sky Airlines is an important component of Montana's transportation network. The Montana Ski Areas Association is a longtime partner with the Commerce Department's Travel Montana winter promotion efforts.

Public-private partnerships like this were identified in the state tourism industry's Montana Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan 2003-2007 as a way for partners – both public and private sector – to pool resources and work cooperatively for common goals that provide benefits to the state. The benefits identified in this campaign include support for Montana businesses and communities that serve winter recreationists, educating Montanans about all the winter recreation activities available in their own backyard, and increased exposure for a number of Montana-based businesses.

Tourism is one of the Montana's basic industries. The state is host to nearly 10 million visitors each year who spend \$1.8 billion in Montana's communities.

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